

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 08238 161835Z

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 IO-13 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5581

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 8238

BEIRUT PASS USINT BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS IN IR PK

SUBJ: INDO-IRANIAN RELATIONS

REF: (A) DELHI 7624; (B) DELHI 7733; (C) DELHI 8086; (D) LONDON 8126

BEGIN SUMMARY: TWO INDIAN PAPERS HAVE COMMENTED ON THE NEED FOR
BETTER RELATIONS WITH IRAN, AND THE JOURNALIST WHO INTERVIEWED THE
SHAH

LAST MONTH CLAIMS HE HAS FOUND A RECEPTIVE ATTITUDE AT THE MINISTRY
OF

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS. APPEARS THE LEFT AND RIGHT CONTINUE TO MISTRUST
IRAN, PARTICULARLY FOR ITS ARMS ACQUISITIONS. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT
MEA OFFICIALS ARE CAUTIOUS ABOUT AN IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WHILE
THE IRANIAN PRESS CONTAINS ANTI-INDIAN ARTICLES THEY BELIEVE ARE
PLANTED. THEY ALSO CLAIM THAT THE SHAH DOES NOT WANT TO MOVE TO A
MORE ACTIVE POLICY WITH INDIA UNTIL INDO-PAK-BENGALIEE NEGOTIATIONS

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 08238 161835Z

GO FORWARD.END SUMMARY.

1. TIMES OF INDIA DELHI EDITOR, GIRILAL JAIN, TOLD POL COUNSELOR LAST WEEK HE HAD MET WITH WARM RESPONSE FROM SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS ON QUESTION OF DESIRABILITY OF IMPROVEMENT OF INDO-IRANIAN RELATIONS. OFFICIALS, INCLUDING FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH, SAID QUESTION NOW WAS HOW TO ADVANCE DIALOGUE WITHWHICH JAIN'S INTERVIEW WITH SHAH HAD BEGUN. JAIN SAID GOI WOULD WELCOME INVITATION TO SEND SENIOR OFFICIALS TO IRAN TO MEET WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS AND SHAH. JAIN TOLD POL COUNSELOR HE WAS GOING TO SEE FOREIGNMINISTER SWARAN SINGH AND WOULD ATTEMPT MEET WITH MRS. GANDHI AND WOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO INITIATE CORRESPONDENCE WITH SHAH FOLLOWING UP ON SHAH'S COMMENTS TO JAIN. (FOR SIMILAR BRITISH SUGGESTION, SEE REF D). POL COUNSELOR TOLD JAIN HE THOUGHT THAT EXCELLENT IDEA AND WISHED HIM WELL.

2. JAIN FOLLOWED UP HIS INTERVIEW WITH SHAH (REF A) WITH FEATURE STORY JULY 4 ARGUING THAT SHAH'S DESIRE FOR FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH INDIA STEMMED FROM IRANIAN SEARCH FOR TIES WITH NATIONS OUTSIDE ARAB ME. INDIA HAD MUCH TO GAIN FROM "UNFREEZING" ITS RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND SHAH "IS SENSIBLE ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE HE CANNOT EXPECT INDIA TO WEAKEN ITS TIES WITH EITHER MOSCOW OR BAGHDAD OR BOTH AS A PRECONDITION FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES." FOR ITS PART, INDIA "SHOULD AT LEAST APPRECIATE DILEMMA OF IRAN'S RULING ELITE AND RECOGNIZE ITS INTENTION NOT TO ALLOW ITSELF TO BE DRAGGED INTO CONFLICTS OF SUBCONTINENT EXCEPT PERHAPS AS MEDIATOR, BUT TO SUE PAKISTAN AS LEVER IN ITS STRUGGLE WITH RADICAL ARABS."

3. EDITORIAL IN HINDUSTAN TIMES JULY 4 SAID INDIAN FEARS OF IRANIAN ARMS FILTERING THROUGH PAKISTAN TO BE USED AGAINST INDIA WERE EXAGGERATED. "IRAN IS RIGHTLY OF THE VIEW THAT ANY FURTHER DISINTEGRATION OF PAKISTAN WOULD PROMOTE INTERNAL CHAOS AND EXTERNAL INTERVENTION AND POSE A THREAT TO SHAH'S OWN COUNTRY AND ITS SEALANES ...THERE IS EVERY REASON FOR INDIA TO PURSUE ITS POLICY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH IRAN AS ALSO WITH OTHERSTATES IN PERSIAN GULF AND BEYOND."

4. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, BOTH THE OBSCURANTIST "RIGHT" AND THE COMMUNIST "LEFT" PRESS ARE STRONGLY ANTI-IRANIAN. THE COMMUNIST PRESS IS BEGINNING TO ATTACK THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN "IRANIAN LOBBY" IN INDIA WHICH IS SAID TO BE MERELY ANOTHER FORM OF THE PRO-US LOBBY. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 08238 161835Z

5. COMMENT: WE THINK IT'S A BIT PREMATURE TO TALK OF AN "IRANIAN LOBBY" BUT FIND IT MILDLY ENCOURAGINGTHAT TWO OF THE MORE THOUGHTFUL PAPERS IN DELHI ARE PREPARED TO RUN AGAINST THE CURRENT OF CONCERN OVER IRANIAN ARMS. OUR OWN CONVERSATIONS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY DO NOT SUGGEST QUITE THE SAME DEGREE OF OPTIMISM ABOUT IMPROVING INDO-IRANIAN RELATIONS THAT JAIN SAYS HE FOUND. AT THE MIDDLE-LEVEL (JOINT SECRETARY), OFFICIALS DO ATTEMPT TO DOWNPLAY THE LEVEL

OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH IRAQ, AND PROTEST THAT INDIA HAS PUBLICLY
SAID IT WISHES BETTER RELATIONS WITH IRAN. (REF B & C)
BUT THEY RE-
PEATEDLY FOCUS ON ANTI-INDIAN ARTICLES IN THE IRANIAN PRESS,
THEIR SUSPICION THAT THESE ARE FED FROM THE IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY,
AND CLAIM THAT THE SHAH HAS MADE CLEAR TO THEIR AMBASSADOR IN
TEHRAN THAT HE DOES NOT WANT ANY HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES OF VISITS
WITH INDIA UNTIL THE INDO-PAK-BANGLADESH RELATIONSHIP, PARTICULARLY
POWS, IS STRAIGHTNED OUT. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PUSH GENTLY ON THE
DESIRABILITY OF A MORE ACTIVE INDIAN POLICY TOWARD IRAN.
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